


Equity Team Institute
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**Ensuring Success for English Learners:
What's Language Got To Do With It?**

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Closing the Achievement Gap

America's 5.4 million LEP students represent the fastest-growing student population, expected to make up one of every four students by 2025.

Since success in the 21st century calls for all students to be proficient in academic English — as does No Child Left Behind — schools must be prepared to **identify English language learners, measure what they know, and teach them effectively.**

Source: NCLB website

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In this session, we will consider:

- Challenges facing English Learners and common practices that fail to address them
- **A Focused Approach:**
 - Instructional Blueprint for ELD and explicit language for content learning
 - Features of Language Instruction: bricks and mortar
 - Effective program planning

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A Key Question...

What's language got to do with it?

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Academic Success

- Depends on **learning to read well**.
- Learning to read well depends on **rich language knowledge**.
- Explicit English language instruction helps ensure English learners gain the knowledge they need to be academically successful.

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The Fourth Grade Plunge

"In fourth grade, an alarming number of students' reading comprehension starts a drastic decline and rarely recovers. Early delays in **oral language come to be reflected in low levels of reading comprehension**, leading to low levels of academic success.

If we are to increase children's ability to profit from education, **we will have to enrich their oral language** development during the early years of schooling.

Schools could do much more than they do now to foster the language development of less-advantaged children and children for whom English is a second language.

-Andrew Biemiller, American Educator, Spring 2003

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What State Assessments Tell Us

CELDT → Measures *basic, everyday language proficiency*
60% of 10th grade EL = Proficient in 2005

CST → Measures academic achievement, which requires *complex academic language* proficiency
3% of 10th grade EL = Proficient in 2005

Only 50% of 11th grade EL passed CAHSEE by end of 2005

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The Majority of English Learners ...

- Have received all of their education in American schools - many were born in the U.S.
- Tend to achieve oral fluency in everyday language, yet...
- Lag in measures of academic success and tasks requiring academic language proficiency

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Representational English Learner Profiles

Recent arrivals to U.S.	Long-term English learners: Strong L1	English Dominant: Limited L1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong L1 literacy ■ Often new to English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ May be literate in L1 ■ Strong English language & literacy, some gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong English language & literacy, some gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Limited L1 literacy ■ Often new to English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ May have limited literacy in L1 ■ Low literacy, seemingly strong oral English, many gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low literacy, seemingly strong oral English, many gaps

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Why Have We Not Been More Successful Teaching English to Long-term English Learners?

- Many English learners are stuck at the **intermediate level**. They may be automatic and skilled in conversational English.
- We have not identified **the gap** between the language a student knows and **what is required to succeed academically**.
- Explicit instruction in **how to use language needed to express thinking** is rarely provided.

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Common Practices That Fail to Address Real Needs

- Lowering expectations; assuming certain students can not achieve academically
- Teaching all students the same way, regardless of previous experiences or needs
- Providing interventions that do not include language instruction

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Common Practices That Fail to Address Real Needs

- Providing language instruction that:
 - Is ad-hoc, rather than explicit and sequenced
 - Does not link everyday and academic uses of English
 - Is not backward mapped from the cognitive task at hand
 - Fails to provide sufficient oral and written practice for learners to become adroit users of English.

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Academic English

"Few children arrive at school fully competent in the language required for text interpretation and for the kind of reasoned discourse (that is) key to becoming an educated person.

Academic language is learned ... from teachers and from textbooks. It is learned through frequent exposure and practice over a long period of time – from the time children enter school to the time they leave it.

The most reliable sources of academic language are written texts. However, they serve as the basis for language development **only with instructional help.**"

"Often explicit teaching of language structures and uses is the most effective way to help English learners."

Wong Fillmore and Snow, 2000

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Questions Driving the Development of A Focused Approach

- What kind of model can we propose that makes transparent how to teach both the:

- Continuum of English language skills,
- Academic uses of language to support grade-level content?

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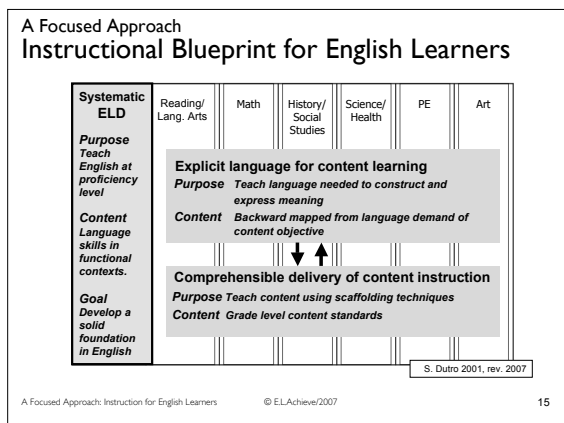
Elements of a Focused Approach Instruction for English Learners

- An instructional blueprint that distinguishes among purposes for instruction:
 1. Targeted English instruction (ELD) by *proficiency level*
 2. Explicit language instruction for *grade-level content learning*
- Backward mapping **language instruction**:
 - Language functions (purposes),
 - Grammatical forms and sentence structure, and
 - Structured language practice to develop fluency
- **Planning** for classroom, site and district implementation

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Explicit Language for Content Learning

- Equip students with the *language needed to express their understanding of the content.*

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Systematic ELD . . .

is our opportunity to teach English learners the language they:

- did not learn before entering school,
- need to be able to use every day, and
- will not be taught in any other content area.

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Elements of a Focused Approach Instruction for English Learners

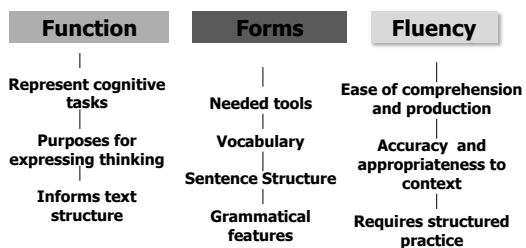
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A Focused Approach Features of Explicit Language Instruction



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Access to the Core

After adolescent ELs acquire the basic skills, they need to become **active readers and writers who use reading and writing processes**. Using these processes, learners can examine a text, make conclusions about it, articulate and incorporate those conclusions.

Double the Work, 2007

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Access to the Core (cont.)

The process creates awareness about the **functions of language**, and the reflection inherent in the process **helps students practice the kind of highly abstract thinking that is essential** to succeeding in high school and beyond into college or the world of work.

Double the Work, 2007

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Overarching Language Functions

■ Language functions common to academic texts, include:

- Cause and effect
- Compare and contrast
- Explication
- Proposition & Support (problem/solution)
- Sequencing

■ Additionally, English Learners must be able to navigate:

- Participating in classroom discussions
- Expressing and defending opinions
- Social courtesies in formal and informal settings
- Expressing time relationships
- And more

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For Example:

Students are literate and English proficient to the extent that they can learn with and respond appropriately to written materials:

8th grade Science

- textbooks
- lab directions
- journal articles

8th grade English

- poetry
- novels
- plays

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Language Forms

Grammatical features, sentence complexity & vocabulary

Considering Language Forms in Context

- Snakes are believed to have evolved from reptiles with legs and to have been on earth for 95 million years.

What does it take to comprehend this sentence?

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Snakes are believed to have evolved from reptiles with legs and to have been on earth for 95 million years.

What content-specific vocabulary must the reader know?

- evolved
- snakes
- reptiles
- earth
- 95 million

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Snakes are believed to have evolved from reptiles with legs and to have been on earth for 95 million years.

What language knowledge must the reader have?

■ **Passive voice (using present perfect)**

...are believed to have...

...to have been

■ **Subject in second clause is implied; not directly stated**

■ **Complex uses of prepositions**

...evolved from ____ with ____

...on earth for ____;

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Snakes are believed to have evolved from reptiles with legs and to have been on earth for 95 million years.

What else must the reader comprehend?

■ **Who believes this?**

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Determining What Language to Teach

■ **Vocabulary specific to the topic (**bricks**)**

– *What are we talking or reading about?*

■ **Functional language connecting topic vocabulary in sentences (**mortar**)**

– *What are we saying about it?*

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Identifying brick and mortar

- Snakes are believed to have evolved from reptiles with legs and to have been on earth for 95 million years.
- _____ are believed to have _____ and to have been _____ for _____.

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Teaching both *bricks* and *mortar*

- Both cobras and rattlesnakes are extremely dangerous.
- Both _____ and _____ are extremely _____.
- Zoologists argue against poisonous snakes being kept as pets.
- _____ argue against _____.

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It takes both...
topic-specific brick and
functional mortar
to generate language.



What are we talking about?
What are we saying about it?

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Practice Develops Fluency

During every lesson, every student should have the opportunity to:

- Practice putting **brick** and **mortar** together
- Engage in frequent structured oral practice because...

***If you can't say it aloud,
you can't put it into writing.***

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What does Explicit Language Instruction look like?

- Clear purpose (language function and needed lang. forms) backward mapped from lesson objective
- Engaging and relevant topics
- Instructional sequence:
 - I Do It (Modeling, direct instruction)
 - We Do It (Guided, interactive instruction)
 - You Do It (Independent - collaborative and solo)

- Pace that is *brisk* and *appropriate*

For Systematic ELD:

- Clearly identified proficiency level
- Students do at least 50% of the talking

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Recurring **Focused Approach** Themes

- Knowing our students
- Identifying discipline-specific language
- Connecting reading, writing, listening, and speaking
- Explicitly building receptive and expressive language

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Elements of a Focused Approach Instruction for English Learners

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■ Backward mapping **explicit language instruction**:

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■ **Planning for classroom, site and district implementation**

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Effective Instructional Programs

Planning → **Capacity Building** → **Implementation**

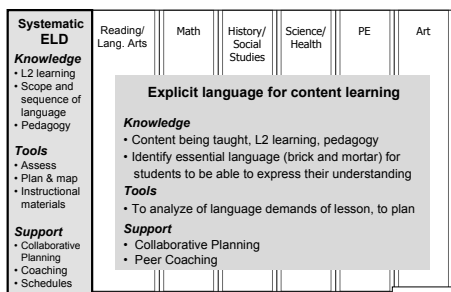
- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ District ELL Program Gives & Benchmarks ■ Placement Criteria ■ Grouping Options ■ Materials and Assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participate in teams of teachers and administrators ■ Deepen knowledge ■ Learn tools ■ Try it out ■ Share how it's going | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Institutional support: time, materials, coaching ■ Student data used to plan and manage instruction ■ Structured, data-based, collaborative planning |
|--|--|--|

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A Focused Approach What do Teachers Need?



2001, rev. 2007

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Assuring Language is Taught Consistently Throughout the System Requires ...

- **Clear map** with guidelines and common language for describing explicit language for **both Systematic ELD** and **Explicit Language for Content instruction**,
- **Consistency** both vertically (through the grades) and horizontally (within each grade,
- **Local assessments** that are analyzed by teachers so they know what needs to be taught and how well it has been learned, and
- **Institutional support** - time for collaboration and flexibility in scheduling based on student needs.

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One teacher's stated goal:

To equip students with the language they need to express the sophistication of their thinking.

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